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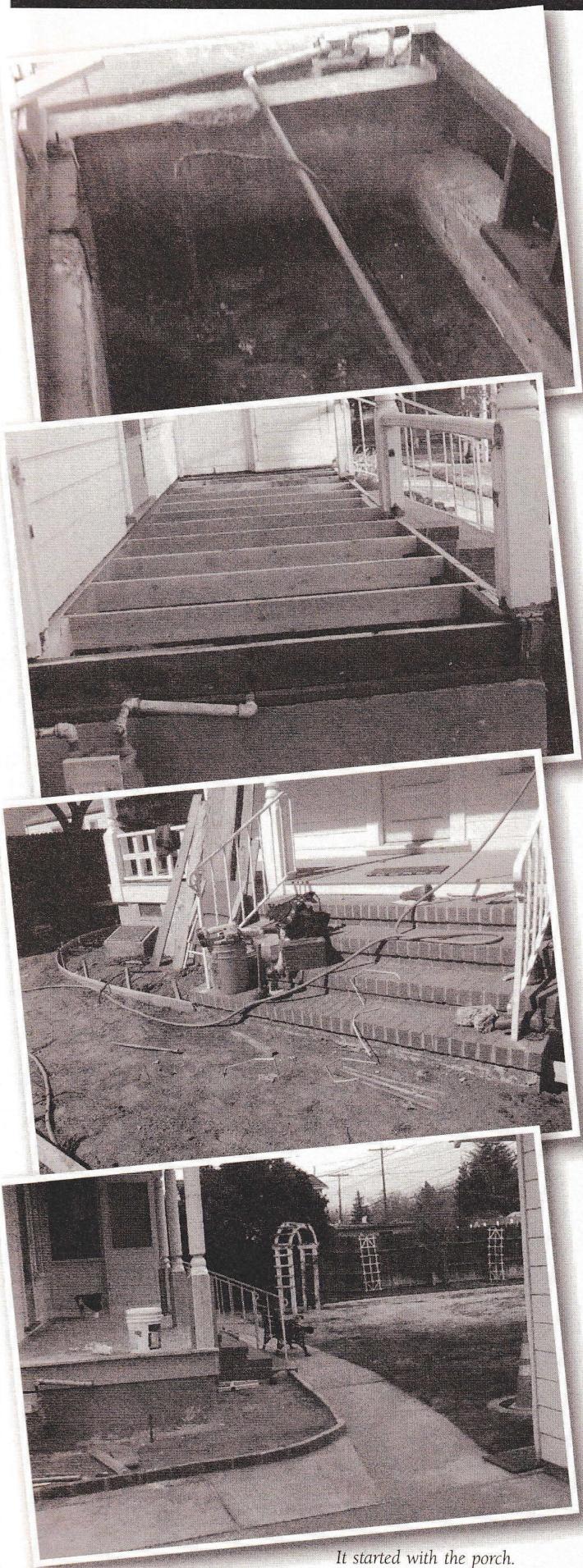
KEEPING LODI'S GRAND OLD HOUSE, GRAND! HILL HOUSE MUSEUM RENOVATION

By Jackie Perry



Lodi is often referred to as "California's best kept secret," a beautiful, small town community with great people, rich soil, almost perfect weather and an extremely interesting history. The Hill House Museum at 826 S. Church St. is part of that history.

There have been many men and women connected to the Hill House over the years in an effort to keep up the grand old house and we appreciate their love and care of the museum. Some are still with us and others have gone on. This issue is primarily reporting on the



It started with the porch.

most recent renovation that is taking place. This grand Queen Anne Victorian house will require continued care if she is to remain vibrant in our community.

In 2014, the Hill House was again in need of much attention with little money to do the job. The outside of the house was deteriorating as well as the grounds and the interior. Janice Roth says she's grateful that new members of the Lodi Historical Society came to the rescue and much of the immediate exterior work has been done.

Loren Perry was installed as a member of the Lodi Historical Board of Directors in 2014 and immediately got involved in the renovation because of his 45 years of work experience. As a well known general contractor and carpenter his skills were definitely needed and he could help out on many levels. The first project was to replace the back porch and railings, as there was a lot of dry rot.

Plans for the improvement of the beautiful backyard had been delayed for a number of years due to lack of funds, expertise and someone to oversee the project. With Loren, Vern Weigum, Ron Marien and a landscape committee, from the Historical Society Board, after several meetings they determined the sidewalk layout, the sprinkling system, materials to be used and future plans to add flowers and greenery. So all of the sod, sprinklers, side-walks, some flowers and shrubbery were removed. Also two sections of the driveway were replaced to help with the drainage problem.

Ron Marien said his involvement with the Hill House started when Vern Weigum asked him to cut back the Nandina (a semi evergreen shrub), which satisfied Vern, and Ron's ongoing involvement is history. He said, "The connecting link was for me to do what needed to be done to preserve some of the past." Hugh Metcalf and Ron became friends and

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The Hill House at its original location on School Street.

Vern Weigum has memories of when the Hill House was located downtown on School Street, across from the Post Office. As a young boy he was fascinated as he and a friend watched the large house being moved to its present location on Church Street. The move took place in 1948 and it was a "big deal" as local residents watched the process. The move was accomplished by the "Fitzsimmons Company."



Ralph Lea

The Dream

Ralph Lea, is known to many as the original dreamer of what the Hill House could mean to our community.

Following are recent memories of Maurice Hill and the Hill House. "I met Maurice Hill through a mutual friend of ours, Walter Boese. Maurice had some items he wanted to sell and I was interested, so Walter put me together with Maurice. This was about 1976. We both loved history, especially Lodi area history, so we hit it off right away.

Maurice had most of his writing done by this time. He was a published writer of poetry and music. I was allowed to visit his home (now the Hill House Museum) only after Maurice cleaned up. Maurice was particular about that.

Maurice had a fondness for cats. One of his cats had a favorite chair. If a visitor sat in the cat's chair,

the cat would jump on the visitor's lap. If the visitor did not get up from the chair quick enough, the cat would eventually dig his claws into the visitor's legs.

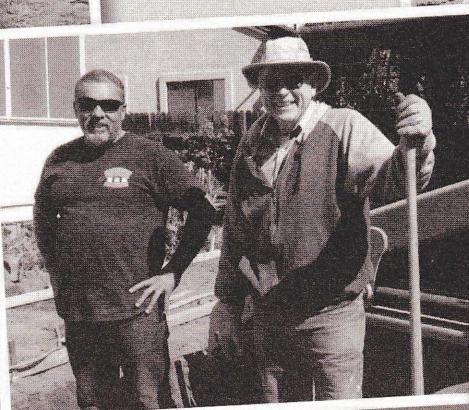
Maurice was in pretty good health up until a few days proceeding his death in 1984. He climbed the stairs to the second floor right up to his end of life.

Maurice's attorney Robert Elliott put together a trust of Maurice's choosing, Robert Elliott was the head of the trust. Trustees included myself (Ralph Lea), Jim Turner, and Carol Marvel. After Maurice died in 1984 I was the executor of the estate.

Maurice Hill originally wanted the San Joaquin County Museum as beneficiary for the house, however, they rejected the gift due to Maurice's stipulation that the house be opened to the county residents. So the house returned to the Trustees, who later partnered with the Lodi Historical Society (LHS) to operate the home as a museum.



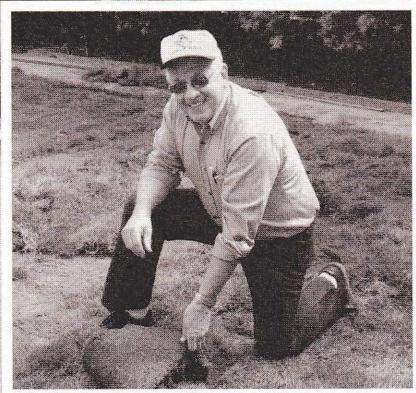
Tear Out.



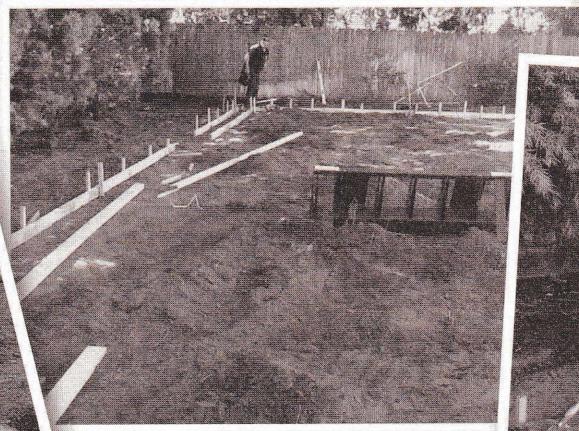
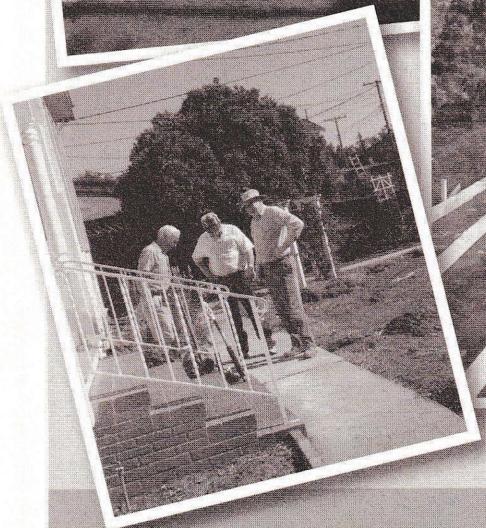
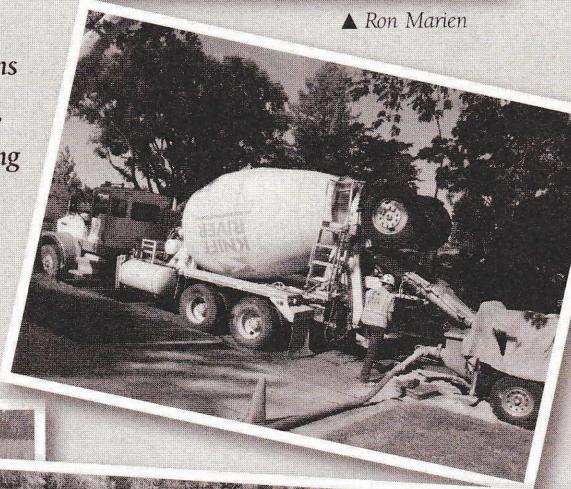
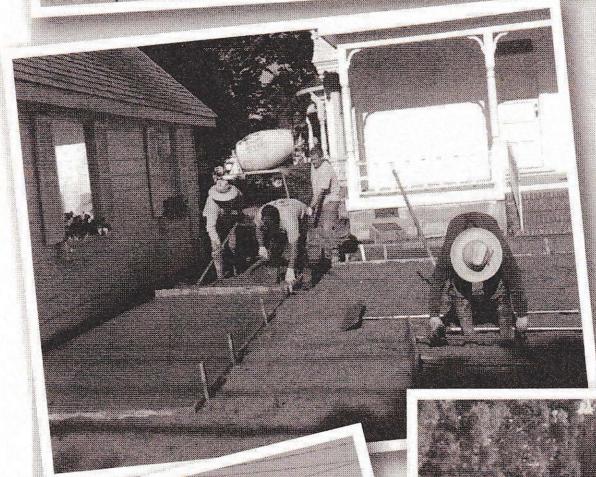
▲ Manuel Freitas & Loren Perry

Loren used a crew of talented laborers, some of whom donated time to the project.

Loren and Ron donated many hours over several months to this renovation. Loren says, "It is rewarding to see something with so much grandeur and history be restored, close to its original construction quality."

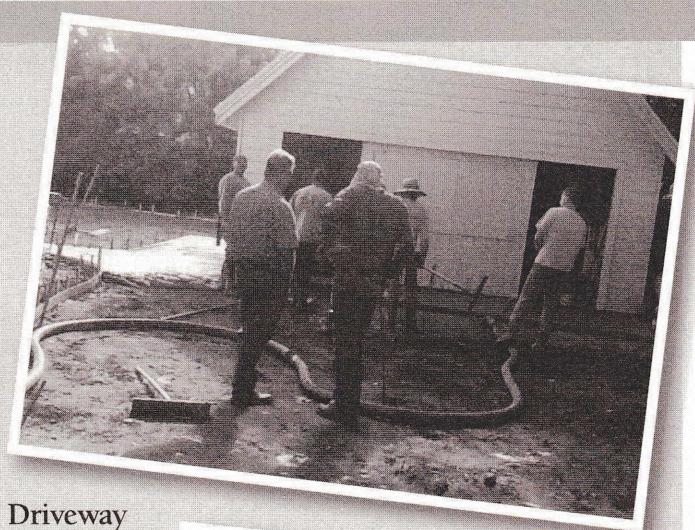
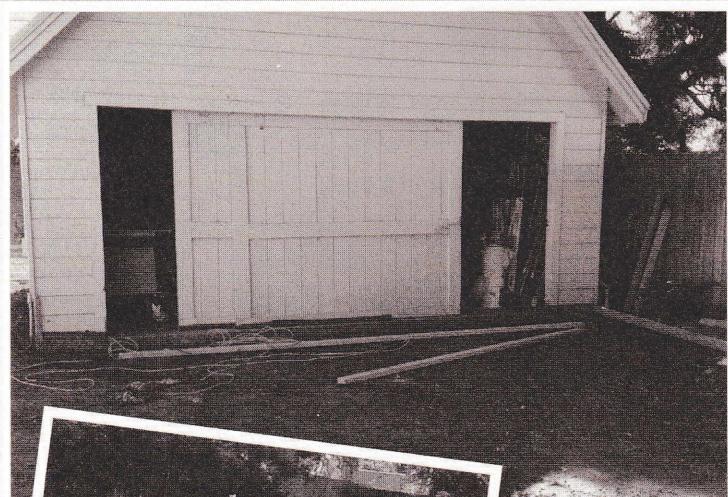


▲ Ron Marien

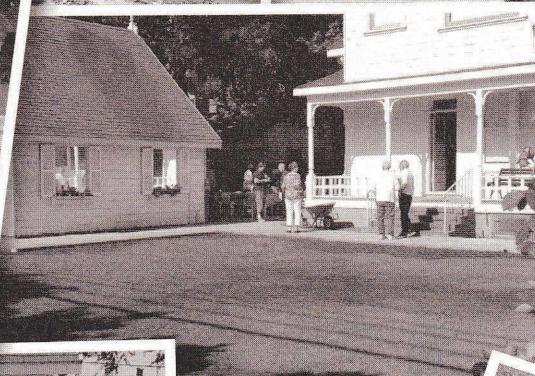
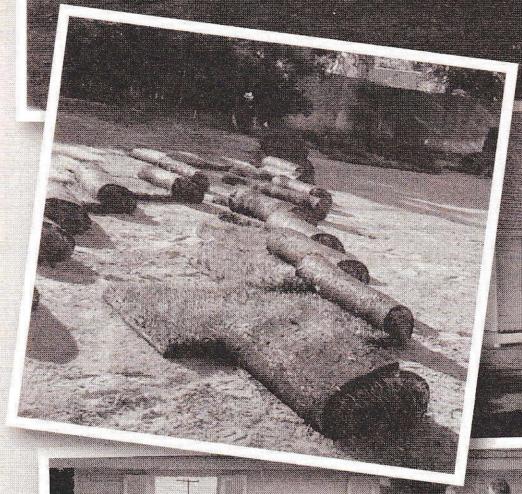


Cement

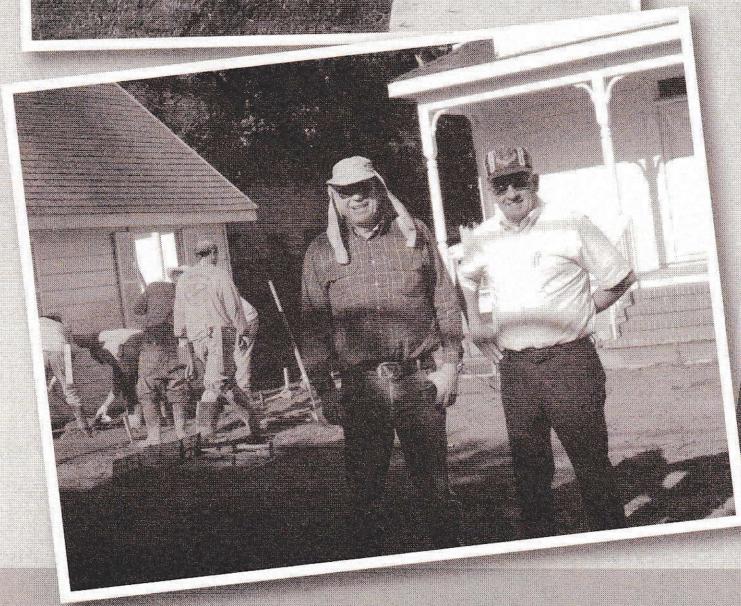




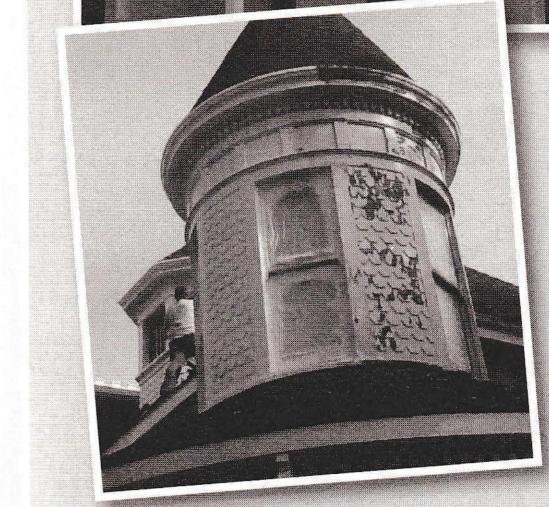
Driveway



Sod & Sprinklers



Hugh Metcalf, Ron Marien & Loren Perry ▲



work partners and the two saw things that needed to be done and did them. Other things needed to be performed by professionals, such as pruning of the tall trees, repair and support of the windows, repairing the back porch and painting the outside of the house. This was when Loren Perry entered the picture with his expertise!! Yay!

The entire outside was power washed and painted and the beautiful old Victorian home just shines!

The Hill House is lucky that Ron loves landscaping and repairing and preserving old things. He likes to problem solve, and if he can't figure it out he will seek out advice so the job can be completed. He thinks of himself as an "Artist at Work." Ron is thankful for being allowed to play in this environment and making the Hill House a second home.

Hugh Metcalf, another caretaker of the Hill House for many years, made a significant contribution very much worth mentioning. When the old roof was replaced

Hugh repaired the finials and their braces and built 107 new crenellations. The fire department put the finial on the circular roof and Hoag Construction installed all the rest. Hugh continues to be a "jack of all trades" and is always fixing something in and around the house. Hugh has continued to be a man loyal to the dream of keeping the Hill House, grand.

Another recent connecting link was Marlo Preszler, who accepted the appointment as the LHS President. Marlo often joined Hugh, Loren and Ron working on the back porch project. Marlo has since taken some time off and has been missed, they will welcome him back at any time!

▼ Hugh Metcalf and Ron Marien.

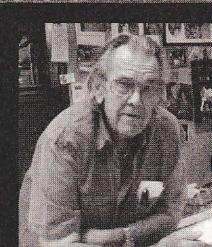


"Visiting the Hill House Museum is a visit into the past. Visitors may see original, period items, pictures and decor of a bygone era, right here in Lodi," says Janice Roth. She was first introduced to the Hill House in the early 1990's when the Lodi Symphony and the Hill House held a joint Christmas Open House Fundraiser. Only a few rooms were open to view at that time. Lucky for Lodi, Janice has never left and has spent countless hours in preparing rooms and displays to be viewed. There were lots of boxes and trunks to go through and exhibits to set up, and it took several months to organize, hang pictures and arrange rooms.

I believe that Janice Roth, is top of the list of the "Hill House caregivers," and she asks us all to volunteer at least one afternoon a month to help keep up this grand old house. Contact Janice to help with the interior at 209-368-3824 or Ron at 209-368-6550 to help with the grounds.

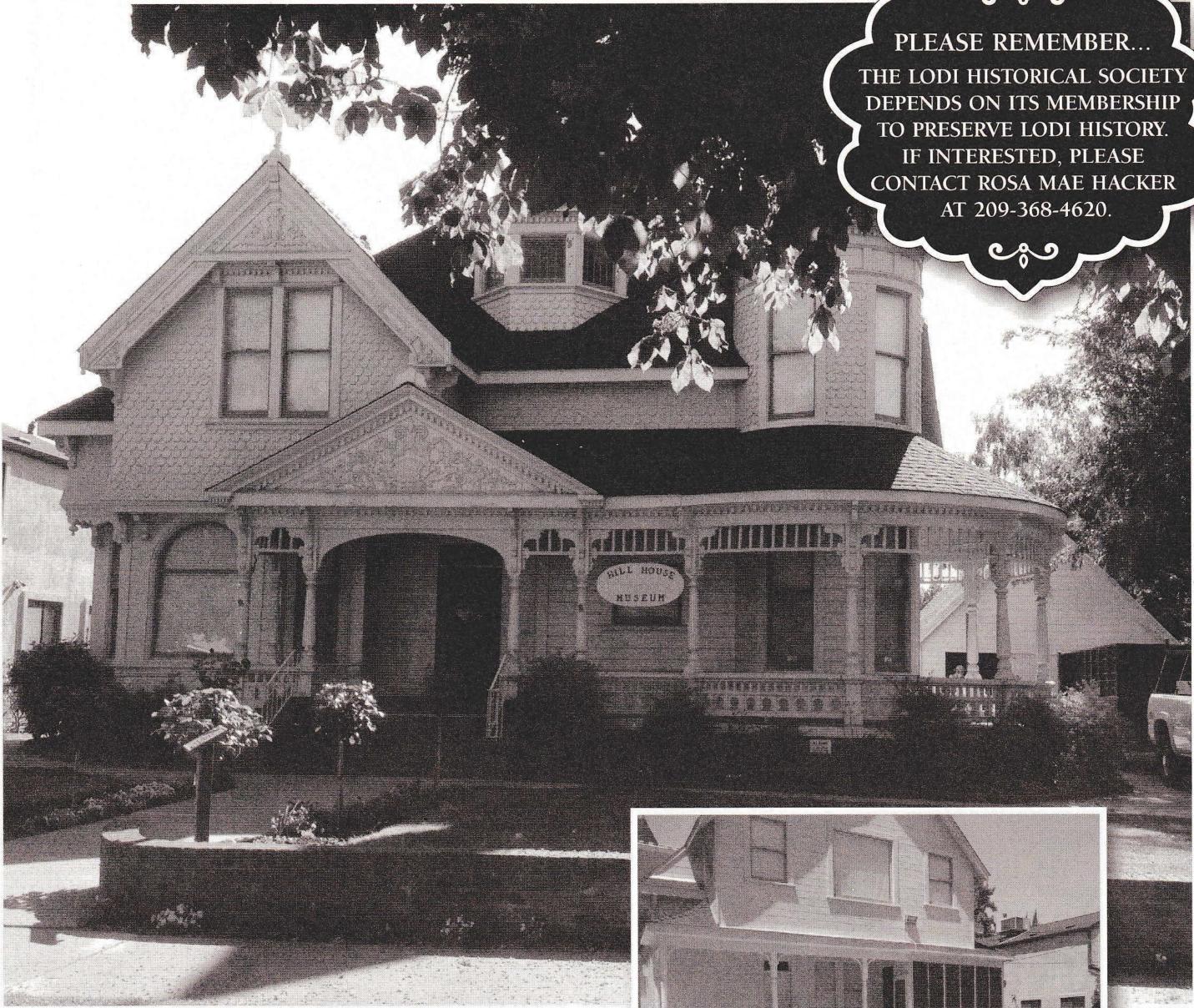


Vern Weigum, Jim Finch, Ron Marien and grandson Anthony, and Janice Roth.



Vern Weigum, owner of "Weigums Lodi Nursery" has been an adviser for his vision of the new landscaping. He doesn't get down and play in the dirt anymore but he has donated new plantings, trees, flowers, bricks for the borders, and new sod. Delta Blue

Grass donated a portion of the sod as well. The past four years Vern has enjoyed watching the progress and says the Hill House is very important to him. His interest in putting so much into the house is because it has been so much a part of Lodi's history over the past century and he would like it to be here a very long time. Vern says there is a lot more to do but is an ongoing project. So if you like to play in the dirt come on over and help!



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TO PRESERVE LODI HISTORY.
IF INTERESTED, PLEASE
CONTACT ROSA MAE HACKER
AT 209-368-4620.

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